How to Make and Mix Concrete

Concrete projects can be tough work. While there isn't much you can do about the labor, you can lighten the load on your wallet by making your own concrete mix. The process is simple, and you can tailor your mix for perfect results.

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You might not realize it, but there aren't any magic recipes inside those concrete mix bags at the home store. Making your own concrete mix is easy. Plus, when it comes to a large project, you can cut the cost of your concrete significantly. Keep reading to find out how to make and mix concrete.

How to Make and Mix Concrete

Step 1: Gather Your Tools and Materials

Here's what you'll need to mix your own concrete:

- A bag of portland cement
- Bulk coarse gravel or crushed stone
- Bulk sand
- Wheelbarrow
- Bucket (1- or 2-gallon)
- Bucket (5-gallon)
- Shovel
- Small cup or container

Note: Concrete and cement are not the same things. Concrete is a mix of stone, sand, and cement. Cement is an aggregate used in concrete to act as the adhesive in the mix.

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Step 2: Measure the Concrete Recipe Ingredients

While there is a bit of leeway, making your own concrete requires following a certain recipe.

Using your smaller bucket as a measuring cup, dump a ratio of 3 buckets of sand to 2 buckets of gravel to 1 bucket of portland cement into your wheelbarrow.

You can make as much or as little concrete as you'd like, as long as you follow the 3:2:1 ratio.

Step 3: Mix the Ingredients

Use a shovel to mix the ingredients in the wheelbarrow. Be sure to scoop from the bottom and scrape the sides periodically so you don't miss any pockets of unmixed materials. The goal is to fully incorporate all the materials before adding water in the next step.

It's important to mix the dry ingredients thoroughly before adding any water. Poorly incorporated mixes will consist of dry clumps of unmixed materials, resulting in a weak, unattractive finished product.

Step 4: Add Water

Use the shovel to create a small reservoir in the middle of the dry mix. Use the larger bucket to add water to the mix, taking care to mix it in as you go. Keep adding water until all of the mixture is wet and the concrete is the consistency of cookie dough.

Again, be sure to scoop from the bottom of the wheelbarrow and scrape along the sides until you're certain that your mix is wet throughout.

Step 5: Adjust the Mix

Mixing concrete is a process, and adding water can be trial and error. If the mix is too dry, simply add water a little bit at a time until it reaches the ideal consistency.

If the mix is too wet, you'll have to add just a bit more dry mix to soak up the water. Instead of using your bucket, use the cup to recreate the ratio. The cup will allow you to make small adjustments without adding 5 gallons of materials to your mix. You'll also be able to make small tweaks to the concrete recipe, according to your liking.

Mixing your own concrete is easy, and it works just as well as pre-mixed bags. It can be a great way to save money on a large-scale masonry project, allowing you to achieve excellent results without breaking the bank.

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